

drifting slowly westwards at a height of about 300 feet and only occasionally beating its long narrow wings. Because of its dark coloration and buoyant flight, I believed it might be a Black Kite, but as it flew overhead it was clear that its tail was unforked. Suddenly the hawk wheeled round and, catching the south-westerly breeze, flew swiftly towards the north-east. With its wings beating rapidly, its profile was not unlike a Peregrine Falcon's.

If, as I believe, the bird was a Black Falcon (*Falco subniger*), it would be the first record of this rare hawk for the Swan River district.

—G. M. STORR, Western Australian Museum.

Congenital Malformation of the Jaw in a Tiger Snake.—

Born in captivity, one of a litter of fifteen Tiger Snakes (*Notechis scutatus*) died at 85 days old. This animal had obvious signs at birth of malformation of the upper jaw involving absence of half of the first labial (proximal to nasal scale) on the left side, and all of the first labial and portion of the nasal scale on the right side, along with underlying tissue on both sides of the snout. This gave the lip closing surface a serrated appearance. Additionally, the upper surface of the rostral splayed and separated the internasals. The bifurcate portion of the tongue was imperfect and the nasal orifices missing.

This animal, in all other respects normal, had never shown any inclination to feed itself and had never been observed to extrude the tongue.

It is probable that if this specimen had been caught in the bush, the disfigurement would have been attributed to injuries inflicted by a rodent predator.

—A. SOFTLY, Department of Microbiology, Royal Perth Hospital.

OBITUARY

W. B. ALEXANDER, M.A.

Wilfrid Backhouse Alexander, an Honorary Life Member of this Club, and former Keeper of Biology in the Western Australian Museum, died in retirement at Parkstone in Dorset, England on December 18, 1965. He had a varied scientific career and was in Australia, and later in England, a scientific catalyst, as it were, inspiring fruitful developments in many natural history studies. In this State he will always be remembered for his ornithological work which set in train the modern school of bird observers. His family's association with Australia, however, began early in the last century. His great grandfather on his mother's side was the well-known Quaker missionary, James Backhouse, whose book, *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies* (London, 1843), is crammed with valuable observations on natural history. Backhouse was in Albany and Perth from December 1837 to February 1838 and two chapters in the book deal with this visit.

W.B.A. or W.B., as he was universally known in England in his later years, was born on February 4, 1885 at Croydon, Surrey and he and two of his three brothers were initiated into nature study by their two maternal uncles who were keen amateur naturalists—James Crosfield was primarily interested in birds and Albert Crosfield was an expert botanist. From his earliest boyhood one of his keenest pleasures was to join their Saturday excursions in the Surrey lanes and woods. Both of his uncles were